# Essential project roles

In this lesson, you are learning to define project roles and responsibilities. Let's now build on what you have learned about building your project team and focus on how to further identify the core roles and responsibilities that are critical to any project.

The project manager

Although all team members are responsible for their individual parts of the project, the project manager is responsible for the overall success of the team, and ultimately, the project as a whole. A project manager understands that paying close attention to team dynamics is essential to successfully completing a project, and they use team-building techniques, motivation, influencing, decision-making, and coaching skills, to keep their teams strong.

Project managers integrate all project work by developing the project management plan, directing the work, documenting reports, controlling change, and monitoring quality.

In addition, project managers are responsible for balancing the scope, schedule, and cost of a project by managing engagement with stakeholders. When managing engagement with stakeholders, project managers rely on strong communication skills, political and cultural awareness, negotiation, trust-building, and conflict management skills.
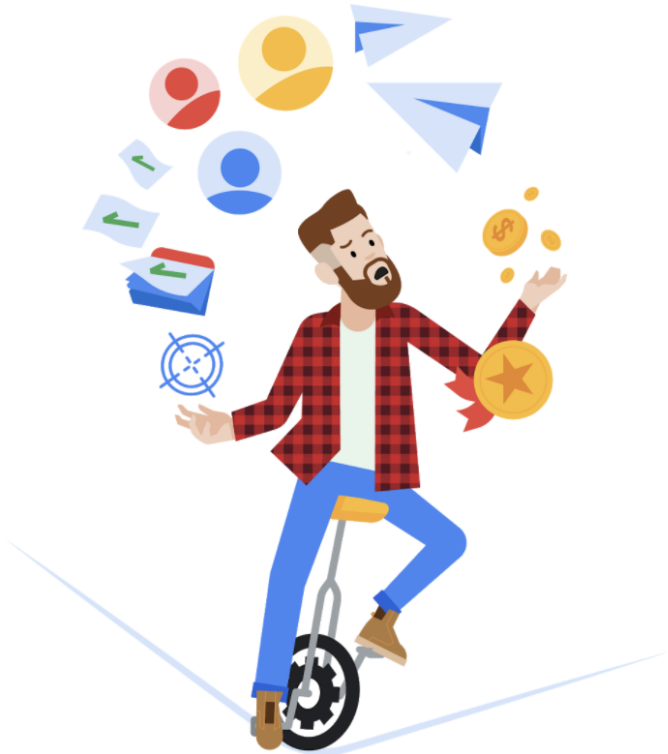
Stakeholders

Have you ever heard the phrase "the stakes are high"? When we talk about "stakes," we are referring to the important parts of a business, situation, or project that might be at risk if something goes wrong. To hold stake in a business, situation, or project means you are invested in its success. There will often be several parties that will hold stake in the outcome of a project. Each group's level of investment will differ based on how the outcome of the project may impact them**.** Stakeholders are often divided into two groups: **primary stakeholders,** also known as key stakeholders, and **secondary stakeholders.** A primary stakeholder is directly affected by the outcome of the project, while a secondary stakeholder is indirectly affected by the outcome of the project.

Primary stakeholders usually include team members, senior leaders, and customers. For example, imagine that you are a project manager for a construction company that is commissioned to build out a new event space for a local catering company. On this project, the owners of the catering company would be primary stakeholders since they are paying for the project.

Another primary stakeholder could be the CEO of your construction company. If the CEO likes to be directly involved with projects for local businesses like the catering company, that would make them a primary stakeholder.

An example of a secondary stakeholder might be the project's point of contact in legal. While the project outcome might not affect them directly, the project itself would impact their work when they process the contract. Each project will have a different set of stakeholders, which is why it's important for the project manager to know who they are, what they need, and how to communicate with them.

Project team members

Every successful team needs strong leadership and membership, and project management is no exception! Project team members are also considered primary stakeholders, since they play a crucial role in getting the job done. Your team members will vary depending on the type, complexity, and size of the project. It's important to consider these variables as you select your project team and begin to work with them. Remember that choosing teammates with the right technical skills and interpersonal skills will be valuable as you work to meet your project goals. If you are not able to select your project team, be sure to champion diversity and build trust to create harmony within the team.

Sponsor

The **project sponsor** is another primary stakeholder. A sponsor initiates the project and is responsible for presenting a business case for its existence, signing the project charter, and releasing resources to the project manager. The sponsor is very important to the project, so it's critical to communicate with them frequently throughout all project phases. In our construction company example, the CEO could also be the project sponsor.

Key takeaway

Although the roles involved in each project will vary, all projects will include a project manager and primary stakeholders who are directly impacted by the project's outcome, such as team members, senior leaders, the customer, and the project sponsor. Secondary stakeholders, whose work less directly impacts the project, may also play a role. Keep these roles in mind as we take a closer look at the importance of stakeholders.